

**Water/Wastewater Commissioners’
Meeting Minutes
March 27, 2012**

Present: Robert E. Courage, Chairman
Dale A. White, Vice-Chairman
Michael E. Putnam, Member
David Boucher
Evelyn Gendron

Call to Order:

Chairman Courage called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Appointments:

Chairman Courage welcomed Mr. Chris Roberge and explained that all water users are billed at the same rate for water consumption, as there is no distinction between commercial or residential water rates. Mr. Roberge said since he was being billed the commercial sewer rate, he assumed he was also being billed a commercial water rate. Chairman Courage explained that for his standard 5/8” water meter, used in almost every residential home in Milford, the water rate is based on the minimum charge of \$21.00 per quarter (or \$84.00 per year) for the meter, and then the water consumption is billed at \$1.95 per 100 cubic feet, which applies town-wide. The sewer portion is billed at 100% of the amount of cubic feet of water actually used, and does not apply to the minimum water meter charge. Mr. Courage explained that the \$4.16 per 100 cubic feet commercial billing difference applies to properties beyond a two family unit, and that Mr. Roberge’s situation is a three family unit. Mr. Roberge explained that he recently separated the plumbing in his building, with three separate meters, so that he wouldn’t be responsible for paying the tenants’ water use for laundry. Mr. Courage asked if there being three separate meters didn’t qualify for the commercial sewer portion of billable water. Mrs. Hardwick, the Water Utilities Billing Clerk, being present, said not currently. Superintendent Boucher said if so voted by the commissioners. Mr. Roberge said the tenants are single individuals in one-bedroom units within his building using a minimal amount of water compared to neighbors who may have two parents, five teenagers and five friends consuming water 24 hours a day and being billed at the residential sewer rate. Mr. Courage said that he didn’t realize the three units were individually metered. Mr. Roberge said yes, with new meters and meter horns. Vice-Chairman Putnam said that since the criteria for commercial vs. residential billing was already decided to warrant further review and discussion, this matter should be tabled. Chairman Courage told Mr. Roberge that the Board would not decide on this tonight, but put this on hold. Mr. Roberge thanked the commissioners. Mr. Courage said that had there been just one meter for the three units, then the ordinance would require commercial billing, but since the units are separately metered, the Board will discuss the matter and return a decision. Mr. Putnam further explained to Mr. Roberge that in the past several months there have been a few cases warranting a closer review of the commercial billing policy. Mr. Roberge said that he understands that the billing policy had to provide for compensation by the larger apartment building customers. Mr. Boucher added that the billing policy is based upon the number of units, not the number of water meters. Commissioner

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White asked what the difference in cost would be with the current commercial billing rate compared to the residential billing rate. Mrs. Hardwick said the \$4.16 versus the \$3.33. Chairman Courage said Mr. Roberge is also paying the \$21.00 quarterly minimum charge on each of the three meters. Mr. Boucher said that Mr. Roberge is not going from the one water meter to the three water meters, since the three meters were already in service, but the recent billing change was from the residential to commercial sewer rate. Mr. Roberge said that the amount is not significant, except when considering the total amount of rent that his tenants pay toward heating an older structure, while considering that most tenants within an apartment complex are not billed for water usage. Mr. Courage asked if his tenants water bills are in the tenants names. Mr. Roberge said the leases call for the tenants to pay for their water bills. Mr. Courage asked Mr. Roberge if he realizes that he, as the property owner, is ultimately responsible for his tenants' unpaid water bills; he said yes, he found that out. Commissioner White asked if it would be cheaper if Mr. Roberge's property had only one meter. Mrs. Hardwick said it would, but that Mr. Roberge preferred the tenants to be responsible for their individual water consumption and associated sewer costs. Mr. Courage said that he personally thinks Mr. Roberge has a good point, and since there are other, similar billing category situations to be considered and ordinance clarification is necessary, the Board will contact him following further review and discussion. Mr. Roberge thanked the commissioners for their time. Mrs. Hardwick explained to the commissioners that when landlords request water and sewer billing to be in the names of the tenants, she first obtains the landlords' signatures to document their acknowledgement of being ultimately responsible for their tenants billing.

The commissioners discussed the board's position and preparation for the March 29th sewer rate hearing, during which the financial imbalance of sewer income versus sewer expenses will be presented, and the consideration of the 18% sewer rate increase. Superintendent Boucher will obtain handouts from Mr. Jack Sheehy, Director of Financial Operations, and determine when Jack can meet with the commissioners. Attorney Drescher will be present during the hearing. Commissioner White said it would be helpful to be prepared to show how an 18% increase would affect a typical sewer billing.

Decisions:

Approval of Final Minutes – Commissioner White made the motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held October 11, 2011. Chairman Courage seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Commissioner White made the motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held February 28, 2012 as amended. All voted in favor.

Water Users Fee/Tax Collector's Warrant – The Commissioners signed this document as presented for the February 2012 Bill Commitment 120229 and for the February 2012 Final Bills issued.

Sewer Users Fee/Tax Collector's Warrant – The Commissioners signed this document as presented for the February 2012 Bill Commitment 120229 and for the February 2012 Final Bills issued.

Bid Document – Curtis Well Field Electrical Conduit, Horizontal Directional Drill Project – Superintendent Boucher explained this information was prepared and sent by Mr. Chris Berg, Wright-Pierce to be sent on April 2nd to five directional drilling companies, with a bid opening date to be held on April 17th, the time of the bid opening yet to be determined. Upon review of the Curtis Well aerial view handouts, Commissioner White made the motion to accept the bid documents as presented by Wright-Pierce and as recommended by Superintendent Boucher this evening. Vice-Chairman Putnam seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

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Election of Board of Commissioner Chairman – Upon discussion, Commissioner White nominated Robert E. Courage for another term as Chairman of the Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners through March 2013, with Vice-Chairman Putnam seconding the motion. Mr. Courage accepted the position of Chairman. All voted in favor. Vice-Chairman Putnam nominated Dale White as the commission's Vice-Chairman until March 2013, with Robert Courage seconding the motion. Mr. White accepted the position of Vice-Chairman. All voted in favor. The new positions/titles will be posted on the Water Utilities website.

Water Department Rules and Regulation Proposed Amendment – Article 5 Water Meters – Superintendent Boucher distributed suggested language to be updated regarding meters greater than one inch, which is for the commissioners' review this evening and does not need to be decided tonight. Chairman Courage said the developer should be the purchaser and the customer should pay for testing expenses, with the Water Utility Department covering future water meter replacement costs. Mr. Boucher said he would update the language and present it at the next meeting for the Board's consideration.

Discussion/Information Items:

Septage Receiving Facility – Superintendent Boucher apprised the commissioners of the submission of pay requisition #5, the progress with building painting, materials received, etc.

Proposed Draft of by-Law Adoption Procedure – Superintendent Boucher distributed the procedure for changing an ordinance, such as posting notices for changes necessary to the Water and Sewer Ordinance, just for review and discussion, as this information was drawn up by Attorney Drescher with the previous Superintendent, Larry Anderson.

Municipal Well Exploration Pump Testing – Superintendent Boucher distributed the email received from Mr. Gary Smith, Wright-Pierce, dated March 6, 2012.

Activities Report - Reviewed by the commissioners. Superintendent Boucher said the Collection System crew has been rehabilitating chamber grates and has been helping with the septage receiving facility project.

Miscellaneous Water Utilities Department Project Updates - Superintendent Boucher said the bed of Truck #36 is separating from supports, and is being welded by in-house personnel. The new chlorine puck injection system at Curtis Well is working, but when it shuts down overnight it doesn't want to start-up again. Lead and Copper water samples will be collected April 9th, with notification letters going to residents April 4th. April 16 – May 4th will be the annual spring hydrant flushing. The Veolia report regarding the well clean-up is being reviewed by the NH DES.

Future Appointments/Meetings:

The Board of Commissioners will consider a sewer rate increase at a public hearing at the Milford Town Hall, in the Board of Selectmen's Meeting Room, on the 29th day of March, 2012, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. The public is invited to attend said hearing and an opportunity will be provided for public comment.

The next Water and Wastewater Commissioners' meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 10, 2012 at the Water Utilities Department, 564 Nashua Street.

Adjournment:

Chairman Courage made the motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:20 p.m. to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(d) (Land). Vice-Chairman Putnam seconded the motion. All voted in favor. No announcements were made when the commissioners exited the non-public session at 7:45 p.m.

Robert E. Courage, Chairman

Date

Dale A. White, Vice-Chairman

Date

Michael E. Putnam, Commissioner

Date